

Nourbakhsh MR, Fearon FJ. An alternative approach to treating lateral epicondylitis. A randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blinded study. Clin Rehab 2008;22:601-609.

Design. Randomized clinical trial

Brief summary of results

- 18 patients (10 men, 8 women, mean age 51) with clinical diagnosis of lateral epicondylitis treated in a college department of physical therapy in Georgia
- All had previous unsuccessful treatment ranging from rest, conventional PT, and steroid injections prior to participation
- Randomized to low-frequency electrical stimulation with a 4 HZ interrupted DC current with intensity as tolerated (N=10) or to identical treatment with intensity set at zero (n=8)
- Six treatments were given over a period of 2-3 weeks
- At the end of 3 weeks, the active treatment group had improvements in grip strength and functional level as measured by the patient's rating of difficulty with activities of daily living; the placebo group had no improvement
- At 6 months, follow-up interviews with 8 of the 10 active treatment group showed that they had maintained their symptomatic and functional improvements
- Authors concluded that low-frequency DC current was effective for lateral epicondylitis

Comments:

- Detailed review is not warranted; only the active treatment group was followed for 6 months, and all of the placebo group was given active treatment after the 3 week period of initial observation

Assessment: Inadequate (lack of follow-up on comparison group)